

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TAIPEI 01893 110750Z

21

ACTION EA-10

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R 110635Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4778

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T TAIPEI 1893

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MORG, PGOV, PINS, PINT, TW

SUBJECT: AFTER THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT CHIANG: THE PREMIER
MOVES TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION

REF: A. USDAO TAIPEI 0200; DTG 080300Z APR 75

B. USDAO TAIPEI 0192; DTG 070700Z APR 75

C. USDAO TAIPEI 0189; DTG 070430Z APR 75

1. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER PRESIDENT CHIANG'S DEATH
PREMIER CHIAHG CHING-KUO TOOK SEVERAL ACTIONS WHICH
SHOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF REINFORCING HIS
POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE MILITARY AND THE
PARTY, TWO ELEMENTS OF THE POWER STRUCTURE WHICH ARE
HEAVILY WEIGHTED WITH OLDER MAINLANDERS WHOSE FIRST
ALLEGIANCE WAS TO PRESIDENT CHIANG RATHER THAN THE
PREMIER.

2. THE MILITARY SHIFTS ANNOUNCED THE DAY AFTER PRESIDENT
CHIANG'S DEATH AND IMPLEMENTED THE SECOND DAY (REFTELS)

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TAIPEI 01893 110750Z

APPEAR SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL, IF NOT INAPPROPRIATE, SO SOON AFTER

HIS PASSING. WE KNOW SOME, IF NOT ALL, OF THE CHANGES WERE PLANNED EARLIER AND BELIEVE THIS ACTION REFLECTS BOTH A DESIRE TO SHOW BUSINESS AS USUAL AND TO IMPLEMENT AT LEAST ONE KEY CHANGE TO GUARANTEE TIGHTER CONTROL BY CCK OVER THE SECURITY APPARATUS DURING THIS SENSITIVE PERIOD.

3. THE TWO KEY REASSIGNMENTS WERE GENERAL CHENG WEI-YUAN (6774/3634/0337) TO CINC TAIWAN GARRISON GENERAL HEAD-QUARTERS (TGGH) AND GENERAL WANG SHENG (3679/0581) TO DIRECTOR, GENERAL POLITICAL WARFARE DEPARTMENT (GPWD). GENERAL YIN CHUN (1438/0193), THE FORMER TGGH COMMANDER, WAS AN AGING GENERAL DESCRIBED IN 1967 BY HIS MAAG ADVISER AS A "THROWBACK TO THE CHINESE WARLORD DAYS". HE HAD A REPUTATION FOR ACTING INDEPENDENTLY --SOMETHING WHICH WE BELIEVE IS UNACCEPTABLE IN THE KEY SECURITY CONTROL HEAD-QUARTERS DURING THIS DELICATE PERIOD. IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN FIRM CONTROL OF THE SITUATION BY BOTH CAREFULLY WATCHING POLITICAL DISSIDENTS AND AVOIDING OVERREACTION BY THE SECURITY APPARATUS AT A SENSITIVE TIME, CCK APPARENTLY DECIDED TO SELECT CHENG WEI-YUAN AS A MAN MORE LIKELY TO FOLLOW DIRECTION THAN YIN CHUN.

4. THE REASSIGNMENT OF WANG SHENG AS DIRECTOR, GPWD REWARDED ONE OF CCK'S LONGEST-STANDING STALWARTS, GIVING THE MAN WHO HAS LONG RUN GPWD THE PRESTIGE AS WELL AS THE POWER, AND PLACED A MAN OF UNQUESTIONED LOYALTY TO CCK IN A KEY MILITARY POSITION AT A CRUCIAL TIME. THE JOB WAS OPENED BY THE REASSIGNMENT OF GENERAL LO YU-LUN (5012/0645/0243) TO REPLACE CHENG AS CINC, COMBINED SERVICE FORCES.

5. A MEETING OF THE KMT CENTRAL STANDING COMMITTEE (CSC) WAS HELD ON APRIL 6 AT 0700, ONLY HOURS AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S DEATH, TO DISCUSS EMERGENCY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE DEATH--INCLUDING YEN CHIA-KAN'S ASSUMPTION TO THE PRESIDENCY AND PREMIER CHIANG'S REQUEST TO THE CSC TO BE RELIEVED OF HIS EXECUTIVE DUTIES IN VIEW OF HIS BEREAVEMENT.

6. THE EARLY MORNING MEETING OF THE CSC WAS NOTEWORTHY FOR SEVERAL REASONS (ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT THE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TAIPEI 01893 110750Z

CONVENING OR THE DECISIONS REACHED REFLECTED ANY PARTICULAR TENSIONS):

A. UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, THE VICE PRESIDENT AUTOMATICALLY ASSUMES THE PRDSIDENCY, IF THE OFFICE BECOMES VACANT. THEREFORE, THERE WAS NO CONSITITUTIONAL REASON FOR THE CSC TO DISCUSS YEN'S ASSUMPTION OF THE PRESIDENCY.

B. THE PREMIER IS NOMINATED AND, WITH THE CONSENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE YUAN, APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT. THERE IS NO RESIGNATION TO THE CSC. HOWEVER, SINCE THE PREMIER IS APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT, THERE IS AN IMPLIED CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENT TO SUBMIT HIS RESIGNATION TO THE NEW PRESIDENT, WHICH AS FAR AS WE KNOW, HE HAS SO FAR FAILED TO DO.

C. THE MEETING WAS CONVENED AT AN EXTREMELY EARLY HOUR, WHICH COULD SIMPLY REFLECT A SENSE OF URGENCY DURING A TIME OF NATIONAL STRESS, BUT WHICH ALSO PROBABLY FORESTALLED ANY EXCHANGE OF VIEWS IN ADVANCE BY CSC MEMBERS WHO MAY HAVE HAD DOUBTS ON THE SUCCESSION OF YEN OR WERE UNHAPPY WITH THE PREMIER.

D. THE MEETING WAS TAPED AND LATER TELEVISED, WHICH MAY HAVE ACTED TO INHIBIT ANY DISPLAY OF DISSATISFACTION ON THE PART OF THE OLD GUARD.

7. ALTHOUGH THE TELEVISED VERSION OF THE CSC MEETING APPEARED TO BE HEAVILY EDITED, ONE SCENE SHOWED KU CHENG-KANG, A PROMINENT AND ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE OLD GUARD, EXPRESSING THE VIEW THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO DELAY THE DATE FOR THE NEW PRESIDENT TO ASSUME OFFICE UNTIL AFTER "CONSULTATIONS" HAD TAKEN PLACE. AFTER SOME DISCUSSION, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER YEN SHOULD IMMEDIATELY ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY WAS APPROVED BY A SHOW OF HANDS. THIS EPISODE SUGGESTS THAT AT LEAST ONE OF THE OLD GUARD KMT MAY HAVE HARBORED HOPES OF FINDING SOME WAY TO BLOCK YEN'S ACCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY AND OF EVENTUALLY INSTALLING ONE OF THEIR OWN. THE CSC MEETING DEMONSTRATED DUE DEFERENCE TO THE PARTY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PREEMPTING A POSSIBLE MOVE BY THE OLD GUARD TO HAVE DECISIVE VOICE IN THE FUTURE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 TAIPEI 01893 110750Z

CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY AND THE PREMIERSHIP. THEY WERE PRESENTED WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI AND ASKED TO ENDORSE IT WITH THE EYES OF THE NATION UPON THEM. ADDITIONALLY, ANY MOVE ON THE PART OF THE OLD GUARD TO REOPEN THESE ISSUES AT A LATER DATE WOULD BE WIDELY SEEN AS AN ACT OF BAD FAITH AND WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO RECEIVE MUCH SUPPORT FROM WITHIN THE PARTY OR OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE POWER STRUCTURE.

8. WHILE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THERE IS ANY REAL THREAT TO THE PREMIER'S POSITION, WE SUSPECT BOTH THE CSC MEETING AND THE MILITARY SHIFTS WERE A CALCULATED MOVE ON THE PART OF THE PREMIER TO SHOW HIS STEADY HAND AT THE HELM AND TO PREVENT ANY POSSIBLE MOVES BY OTHERS TO CURTAIL HIS POWER DURING THIS CRUCIAL PERIOD OR EVEN FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD.
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